MONSTER. Part Three: Fireflies

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MONSTER. Part Three: Fireflies

by kildeer

Summary

"Oh the house of denial has thick walls
and very small windows
and whoever lives there, little by little
will turn to stone.

In those years I did everything I could do
and I did it in the dark-
I mean, without understanding.

I ran away.
I ran away again.
Then, again, I ran away."

~ Mary Oliver, *Hum Hum*

Orbit

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dramatis Personae:

WILL GRAHAM - *Former: mechanic, police officer, FBI Academy professor, unofficial criminal profiler, murder suspect, and lover of Dr. Hannibal Lecter*
ALANA BLOOM - *Psychiatrist, criminal psychologist, criminal profiler, FBI Academy professor, and former lover of Dr. Hannibal Lecter*
JACK CRAWFORD - *Head of Behavioral Sciences at the FBI and former friend of Dr. Hannibal Lecter*
BELLA CRAWFORD - *Wife of JACK, soon-to-be ghost, and former patient of Dr. Hannibal Lecter*
MASON VERGER - *Heir to the Verger Meat Packing empire, accused child molester, and former patient of Dr. Hannibal Lecter*
MARGOT VERGER - *Twin sister of MASON, disowned daughter, unofficial manager of the Verger Meat Packing empire, and former patient of Dr. Hannibal Lecter*
FREDERICK CHILTON - *Psychiatrist, criminal psychologist, acquited murder suspect, and former colleague/rival of Dr. Hannibal Lecter*
WINSTON - *A dog, devoted to WILL*
ABIGAIL - *A ghost*
CHORUS - *Comprised of characters as noted*

All characters will stand in a semi-circle facing the audience. Characters acting as CHORUS will take one step forward from their positions when speaking as CHORUS. Characters speaking individually or one-on-one with other characters will walk forward to the center of the semi-circle.

ACT I: Scene One

CHORUS (*WILL, ALANA, JACK, BELLA, MASON, MARGOT, FREDERICK*):

We wake.
We wake in hospital beds.
We wake held together by metal -
By needles, pins, and plates.
We wake clean of blood
Sterile, secure as blades.
We wake from the dreams
Of our former lives
And the people we were
Within them.

We wake in surprise
That we wake.

ALANA:

I've always thought of myself
As being *about the mind*
Which feels like a joke now.
A mind without a body
Is just a ghost
Isn't it?

My body -
Mute chauffeur
Secreting cocoon
Malleable accessory
Automatic interface

A shivering wall of cards
Between Being and Nonbeing.

Abigail pushed my body
Through a window into the rain
Where my mind could do nothing
To keep my body from breaking
On the concrete below, and now
As I lie here almost naked
Beneath a scaffolding of steel
I feel as though I am waiting
Guilty hands outstretched
For my neglected body
To obey me
Punish me
Abandon me
Speak to me.

But it simply continues
Limping machine
And I cling to it
Like a long-exiled twin
Finally brought home.

~

Tired-eyed nurses come
To clean, poke, pierce, catheterize my body
Their movements deft, practiced, impersonal.
They tell me I have a visitor.

Chilton holds a bouquet of flowers
Which strike me as vaguely offensive
But of course, he's not really here for *me*.
I'm a go-between, at once necessary and disposable.
A woman-shaped viewing window
Through which men can fixate on each other
From a safe distance.

Chilton is here to talk about Will and Hannibal
And beneath his cool frank gaze (invasive
An unseen hand stroking) my body becomes
An embarrassment -
The distastefully vulnerable party guest
Everyone is politely ignoring.
Faithless, arrogant mistress that I am
I turn away from it, to the conversation
To the farcical approximation
Of my former life.

It's a sobering thing to realize
You've been a prop in someone else's story
And with a distinct sybaritic timbre
Chilton tells me this one is not over.
In their theater of calamity
The End comes for Will and Hannibal
Only at the moment
Of mutual annihilation.

Why would anyone
Stick around for that?

An unfinished story Chilton says
Can be an unbearable thing.

ACT I: Scene Two

CHORUS (*WILL, ALANA, JACK, BELLA, ABIGAIL*):

We are woken
And then we are pulled back
To a place, to a person
To a moment carved bleeding
Out of Time's beating heart.
Or perhaps it is that we are tethered
The fixed leg of a compass
Bound to that which circles 'round
And returns always to us.

ALANA:

The broken window has been boarded up
Not replaced, and from the sidewalk below
It looks like an impossible door
Someone forgot to build stairs for.
The patch covering a blinded eye.
Daylight renders it quiet, unobtrusive
A minor imperfection on the face
Of an otherwise beautiful house.
In daylight, the distance
Between window and sidewalk
Does not seem as though it should have the power
To split a life into Before and After.

June is ending, sweet and fragrant.
Bella Crawford has been dead for almost a week
And today I woke knowing I would come here
Enduring every inch of the journey, bound
To the wheelchair which renders me sentient cargo.
The house's unlocked front door, in response to my touch
Feels like the limp yielding of a corpse
And also a winking invitation -
Welcome back.

The interior of the house is dark
Palatial and cold, seeming to open
Beyond the bounds of its exterior
Like a labyrinth or a museum.
It feels impossible to think, to remember
I walked through this house
Wearing nothing but Hannibal's shirt
Content and thoughtless as a butterfly
On the lip of a shuddering volcano.

I'm not surprised to hear a voice
Low and dreamy, echoing gently
Through the empty rooms as though
The house itself is speaking, but
I don't believe in ghosts.
I'm not surprised to find Will
Sitting on the kitchen floor
Skull tipped back against the refrigerator
Fingers laced between drawn-up knees
Talking to the darkness.

Convalescence has made him gaunt
Pale and tender-looking beneath his scruff

And I wonder whether he's been having
New communion with his After body.
He doesn't turn his head to look at me.
Doesn't ask the logical questions.
There's an unspoken understanding -
We're beyond all that now.
Instead a stillness settles over him
Distant, high-walled, waiting.

When I ask whether he's come
To say goodbye to Abigail
He smiles in the dim cave light
Like a living memory glimpsed
Through layered panes
Dark with battlefield soot.

Remembering him Before
(Not before what happened here. I realize
The blinded eye boarded door portal
Bisecting Will's life is Hannibal himself)
Is like remembering a girlhood crush -
A beautiful, quietly tragic boy in a novel.
Someone imagined, pined for
But never touched.
Never flesh and blood.

Best thing about a memory palace he says.
You never have to say goodbye to anyone.
You just build them a room.

As soon as he says it
His expression knifes into pain
And he lowers his head, becoming
Still. I ask whether it hurts
The place where Hannibal cut him.
He shakes his head, refusing the question
Not answering it. I tell him

I don't think I want to carry
This place on my back forever.

If you're lucky enough he says
To have a choice, then don't.

I want to tell him
He has a choice
But this is After Will.
For all I know
He doesn't.

ACT I: Scene Three

CHORUS (*ALANA, BELLA, MARGOT, ABIGAIL*):

Perhaps it is time to stop
Imagining time, its seasons
As a cycle of birth and death.
After all, the earth
Never truly dies.
It tucks itself in
Beneath leaves and snow
Grows cold, and begins
To dream.

MARGOT:

These days
I only feel awake, alive
When I'm cold.
Summer begins to burn itself away
I become restless, crepuscular
Rising in the deep blue dawn
When birdsong fills the air, a great shattering
With no beginning or end.
Cold enters my body, mapping
Its branching root systems
In sweet swift-melting frost
And I live in my body
Alone.

I hide from the sun
Emerge once it begins to sink
To break and melt on the rim of the horizon
Like a great white yolk.
I walk, I ride, and I watch
The burning amber day
Drain up from the ground
To the tips of the trees
Chased away by cool lavender
Stone-colored twilight.
In darkness my horse and I find our way
Back to the stables by scent
By star and moonlight
Like something out of a fairy tale.

The woods around the estate could be
The bramble wall raised to keep heroes

From approaching Sleeping Beauty's castle.
The manor is grand enough to qualify.
Haunted enough.

ALANA:

I'm not sure
If this is my entrance.

MARGOT:

It could be. I think
You're right on time.
This isn't the easiest place to find.

ALANA:

By design?

MARGOT:

I'll let you
Be the judge of that.

ALANA:

Margot Verger
Returns my smile hesitantly
As though caught off guard
By a foreign custom.
Remote and beautiful as a screen siren
Hedy Lamarr red-cheeked in riding boots
She leads me from the stables
To the manor house which spreads itself
Beneath the gunmetal October sky
With unassailable Old World unconcern.
A monumentality which says, quite calmly -
I was here long before you arrived
And will continue long after you've gone.
Your judgments and jealousies
Are assumed and insignificant.

Uniformed staff incline their heads
As Margot walks past, our footsteps
The offbeat counter rhythm of my cane
Echoing through wide corridors.
Everything is pristine, museum gilt
But there is something off
An apprehension of rot

Of touching beautiful fruit
Only to feel at once its skin over-soft
Thinned to breaking, underbelly mold-velveted.

Margot leads me to a parlor
Full of air and light, empty of warmth
At the far end of which her brother sits
In his wheelchair, looking out
A wall of leaded windows onto the terrace.
On the threshold she turns to me
Eyes lowered, long loose strands
Of dark hair falling against her face.

MARGOT:

I know you have a job to do
But don't let him get too close.
My brother
Likes to provoke people
But he doesn't always realize
When he's gone too far.

ALANA:

I've certainly learned my lesson about that.
Thank you for the warning.

Margot meets my eyes
Mouth opening to speak
But at the last moment refrains.
With a small polite smile
A deferential dip of her head
She leaves us.

MARGOT:

I don't want to leave her
Even though, all in red
She looks like a medieval saint
A battle blade drawn
Against the static palette
Of gold, marble and cream.
The painter wants you to know
She is the disruptive element.
One to brave the thorns and ghosts
To charge the castle gates, but
I forget my Self. Here
The princess and the monster
Are one in the same.

Having invited her in
I can only hope
She is untouchable.

ACT I: Scene Four

CHORUS (*MASON, JACK, WILL, FREDERICK*):

It's not so easy for all of us
To sleep, to dream, to haunt.
There is the itch
Of an open wound which refuses to heal
Which exists weeping, inviting
Infection. An unfinished story
Can be an unbearable thing.
No one cares more about retribution
Than a ghost, and no one
Better understands hunger.

ALANA:

All things considered
I got off easy.
The official story -
A terrible accident
Mason Verger falling into a pit
Broken neck
Face eaten by pigs
Has never added up, but now
In the silence between us
Mason, Margot and I
The truth seems to speak itself
Past any barrier of incredulity.

Mason Verger will never walk again
His face a smoothed mask
Of delicate scar tissue, grafted skin
Voice rasping, belabored, phlegmy
Nothing else broken
Nowhere else bitten.
Damage so discriminate
Could never be the work
Of an animal.

MASON:

Are you here as a psychiatrist
Or a tattle-tale, Dr. Bloom?

ALANA:

Unofficially, neither.
I'm here to watch.

MASON:

It's funny
How people seem to think
Watching is a less
Participatory activity.
The fence-sitters are the ones
Who should be charged extra.

ALANA:

Officially
I'm the one charging you.

MASON:

And are you getting
Your money's worth?

ALANA:

That remains to be seen.

MASON:

I may lack the agility
To stimulate you
The way Hannibal did
But I'll certainly try.

ALANA:

Rumor has it
You've put a bounty on his head.

Mason is quiet, unable
To smile or frown.
His dark eyes glitter, a light
At once cold and feverish.

MASON:

You've had a narrow escape
Dr. Bloom. Barely limping
From the crash. Perhaps
Watching
Will not prove
Therapeutic.

ALANA:

Before
I probably would
Have agreed with you.
I have a different view
Of peace now.

MASON:

I find myself thinking
Of the Eucharist. The devout
Consuming Christ.
What it is they hope
To gain.

ALANA:

The act of eating
Represents a threshold.
The vulnerability of need.
A desire for possession.

MASON:

A desire for *peace*
Dr. Bloom.

ACT II: Scene One

CHORUS (*JACK, BELLA, WILL, ABIGAIL*):

I could not die - with You -
For One must wait
To shut the Other's Gaze down -
You - could not

JACK:

Bella said she didn't want flowers
But people sent them anyway.

The house is full of them -
Roses and lilies, orchids
Bird-of-paradise, peonies
Tulips, chrysanthemums, cosmos
Marigolds and bleeding hearts.

Dining and side tables, kitchen island
Countertops, every windowsill crowded
With baskets, pots, and vases
As though some ancient custom demands
A flower be placed in every spot
Bella might have stood, touched, breathed.
Her diminishing presence embodied
In bright delicate living things
Their overlapping overwhelming scents
Mute voices all telling me
My wife is dying.

And the flowers are dying.
I find myself hating the people
Who've sent cut bouquets.
The ones planted in their own soil
At least stand a chance. But the cut
Begin to brown, brittle, curl in
Almost immediately.
I come home and walk through
A forest of bloom and decay
To reach the room (sparse
In comparison, a monastic cell)
Where Bella waits for death.
Where I can feel Death waiting
(Why does it wait? Taking
Its fill of the flowers first?)
For her.

I think I felt it
Waiting for me, the night
I died bleeding in Hannibal's pantry.
The night I should have died.
Should, because I must
Be alive now.

My eyes blink, my stomach growls
My fingertips make soft oval craters
In the black potting soil
Scattered throughout the house.
But I felt it
In that small dark room -

The silence of things which no longer
Have need for sound.
The stillness of things which no longer
Have need for movement.
Coaxing, a parent gently easing
A toy from the hands
Of a sleepy child.
That's it.
Let go.

I did

And then the aperture
Spiraled outward
Opening again and you
Were beside me
And for a split second
Before I registered the hospital bedding
The nasal cannula and IV tubing
I thought *Yes. It's over.*
You have died and I have died
And we don't have to wait anymore.
We've woken together
In this new place
Restored, imperishable
And when we're ready
Which might be never
We'll get out of bed
And make breakfast.

ACT II: Scene Two

CHORUS (*JACK, WILL, ABIGAIL, FREDERICK*):

They'd judge Us - How
For You - served Heaven - You know
Or sought to -
I could not -

JACK:

April in Wolf Trap is cold and wet
Heavy sinking snow just barely covering
Thick sucking mud, the road to Will's house
Little more than two long tire trenches.
There are dogs waiting as I park my car
Crowding around my legs, muddying

My pants with their dripping fur.
Huffing and muttering amongst themselves
They divide their forces
To alert Will of my arrival
To monitor my approach.
They escort me to an outbuilding, an open shed
Where Will stands in semidarkness
Bent over a work table, back to me
Intent upon a piece of oil-dark machinery.

I haven't seen Will
Since he was discharged from the hospital
But the set of his shoulders makes my heart sink
His ungloved hands chapped red
Indifferent to the cold.

Will often seems to exist
At the bottom of a very deep well.
When I look down I might catch
A flickering hint of water, of movement
A shifting shape of denser darkness
Which designates a person, but
I have to wait for Will
To raise himself up
From the bottom of the well
To meet me. I know
I can't go down to him.
I'm not welcome there.

Before the investigations begin
I need to talk to him
Need to make sure we both know
What happened that night
And why
So we can lie about it.
No, not lie. Hide
What needs to be hidden.

At 6:23pm on March 14,1977
A call was made
From Wolf Trap to Baltimore.
Will remains where he is
In the shed, at work
His back to me
And I feel like an intruder
Reluctant, compelled.
I need to ask him
Why he called Hannibal.

I need to hear him say it
So I can help him hide
All the missed phone calls.
Movements unaccounted for.
Unsupportable alibis.

When he tells me *I told him*
To leave. I told him to run
He calls Hannibal *friend*
Which breaks my heart.
It's incredible
How there's always heart
Left to break.
I don't expect him to say more.
Among men like us, this acknowledgment
Is typically the most we can afford.
But Will, of course
Is not like most men.
Without turning, still working
Voice quiet and halting
He tells me *I wanted*
To run away with him.

I wish I hadn't asked.
I wish I hadn't pushed
Because this doesn't belong to me.
It shouldn't belong to anyone but Will.
To Will and whomever he allows
To be with him where he is.
And that was Hannibal.
God, of course it was Hannibal.
Standing back from the whole picture now
It seems as though it could not have been
Anyone else but Hannibal
And I wish suddenly, powerfully
In a way I never would have expected
That they could have *been.*

In a world where Will
Never became a killer.
A world in which Hannibal was
Exactly who he appeared to be
When I thought he was
My friend.

~

Forced compassionate leave
Has ceased to have meaning
As a bureaucratic term. I hear it
As individual words, an unsteady dance
Of push and pull -
Forced
Compassionate
Leave

Chilton's presence in my office
As I pack up my desk
Feels like fiction bleeding into reality -
A half-remembered character
From a book read long ago.
A sense of bewildered horror and humiliation
To remember my part in the story.
That was me
Driving to Baltimore in the rain
Firing a warning shot as Chilton fled
Handcuffing Will on his front porch
Cross-examining Abel Gideon
Toasting Hannibal Lecter
Asking Will to hunt the Shrike.

Chilton says it isn't over.
Will is still my bloodhound
The key to finding Hannibal.
To killing Hannibal
Before he can kill Will.
He says I have a responsibility.

Responsibility
Becomes *fault* in his silence.
I can't argue.

After that night
Bella told me I was lucky.
I had a choice
A chance to walk away.

Maybe nothing
Is the best I can do
With my freedom.

ACT II: Scene Three

CHORUS (*JACK, WILL, MASON, MARGOT, ABIGAIL*):

And I - could I stand by
And see You - freeze
Without my Right of Frost -
Death's privilege?

JACK:

It's been four days
Since you were last awake
Conscious enough to speak
To track my movements
With your heavy-lidded eyes.
You don't know
How your body is being cared for -
Cleaned, inspected, pierced, warmed.
Given your pain and its numbing
Your agonized impatience
I don't think you would care.

The last time you cared
Was the day, half a year ago now
When you dressed all in white
Took as much morphine as you could
And went to Hannibal.
Entrusted your death to him.
As much as it hurt me to see
Your despair at still being alive
I was grateful to Hannibal
For reviving you. Stopping you.
Thwarting you. I recognized then
A separation between us
I had not been aware of.
Had not imagined.
That my End was not yours
Was not ours.
You opened your eyes
Saw me by your side
Turned your face away in agony
And I thought *That's right.*
Not without me.

I'm with you now.
I thought I would be able to feel
Your awareness of me here with you
But I can't. You lie in your bed
Satin-dark skin gone clay.
Your body, every inch of it
Seen, touched or kissed

Becomes foreign to me -
Ink pulling up its lines, withdrawing
Across the scrolling paper
Unmaking my map of you.
I can almost see you
The way a stranger might -
Pitiful, a middle-aged woman
Slowly dying as spring becomes summer.

You planted the garden with perennials.
Lavender, astrantia, coneflower, foxglove
Emerge now in waves with no help from us
Tiny black ants frantically working
To open the hard round peony buds.
I stand at the window in your room
On the longest day of the year
Watching summer hang
In shimmering layers of sunlight
Humid warmth and tiny insects
All of it radiating white
Gold and green so bright
It blinds me, turning away
Back to the cell of your dying.

Not without me I thought
But here I am
So now what?

Within the terms of my selfishness
My cowardice, perhaps
There was only ever
One answer.

Act II: Scene Four

CHORUS (*JACK, BELLA, WILL, WINSTON*):

And were You lost, I would be -
Though My Name
Rang loudest
On the Heavenly fame -

And were You - saved -
And I - condemned to be
Where You were not -
That self - were Hell to me -

JACK:

Sol and *sistere*
Because the sun stands still.
It shouldn't.
It should have cracked
Burnt dark like a spent light bulb.

Summer remained, suspended
In pale honey amber, full of birdsong
As Bella's heart, lifelong long distance runner
Finally became still.
I called the hospice nurse
And left that no longer waiting room
Wading into a sea of flowers
To begin collecting
Those still alive.

I died. I did not die.
Bella died. Bella is gone.
Bella is here. The shell
Of Bella in a white dress
The one she chose
The first time, is here
In a coffin born aloft
On clouds of flowers
In an empty sanctuary, waiting.

People keep sending flowers
Acknowledgement, I guess -
You are done waiting for this death.
I stand beside Bella's coffin
Safe for now in the knowledge
That I'm not done serving her.
There's an envelope
Protruding like a raised hand
From a spill of lavender Calla lilies
My name, handwritten on the envelope
A thin, long-limbed silverfish
And I know. Of course I know.
Knowing doesn't stop me
From reaching out
From opening
From reading Hannibal's message to me
On the occasion of my wife's death.
It's poetry. I barely register the words

Because there are footsteps
Behind me. I know it's Will.
It has to be Will
Because the card is here.
A summoning
Which doesn't make sense
But as I turn to see
Will in his best suit
Nothing can shake my conviction.

Hannibal would not be here
If Will was not here.
Will would not be here
If Hannibal was not here.
Having thought that, it proceeds -
Why is Will still here?
How long can he bear
To be here without Hannibal?

I want to tell him
He can survive this.
He can survive not knowing.
He can survive the lost touch
And the unhealing wound.

But how can I
When I couldn't?

EPILOGUE

WINSTON:

It's getting cold.
Those outside
Seek warmth
Sleep
In the hidden places
Of the forest.
We inside
Draw close
To the fire, but
Our shelter
Is emptying.
Will shuts away
Everything he touches
All the things
Which smell like him

Are carried away
In boxes.
It makes our shelter
Colder.
I follow him
From room to room
Afraid
That if I'm
Not there
He's going
To go away again.
He's going
To be lost.
By day he works
Silent
Awake but
Absent-smelling
While we
Stand guard.
By night we crowd
Onto his bed
Shaking for him
To hold us
As he sleeps
But his smell
And his warmth
Are enough.
At first snow
He opens the door
For the others
To run and play
But I stay with him
Following him
As he collects
Book
Bottle
The bottle
Which smells
Like Hannibal
And sets them
On the last table.
I press
Against his legs
Seeking his hands
As he opens
The book.

WILL:

Shouldn't our ancient suffering
Be more fruitful by now?
Isn't it time our loving freed us
From the one we love
And we, trembling, endured -
As the arrow endures the string
And in that gathering momentum
Becomes more than itself.
Because to stay
Is to be nowhere.

Chapter End Notes

Wow, so this poem is the longest yet for MONSTER. and the writing process was *difficult*. I started it in November and have been running away from and dragging myself back to it ever since (y'alls, I made color-coded index cards and was arranging them on my bedroom floor to work up an outline for this thing). It felt like this massive hurdle I had to clear since I knew it was going to be the first poem of Fireflies, and now that I'm satisfied with it, I feel *so* much more confident about moving forward :) *Note: the Chorus sections in Act II are from "I Cannot Live With You" by Emily Dickinson, and Will's stanza at the end of the poem is from "The First Elegy" by Rainer Maria Rilke

Scars

Chapter Summary

Will seeks guidance as he crosses the ocean.

Will:

It's cold on the water and I can feel
How far away I am.
From shore
From people
From anything that could save me.

I'm on my back, cocooned -
Hat, mittens, parka, sleeping bag
Listening to Joni Mitchell
On a portable cassette player.
Looking up at the stars.

I thought my father would be with me
His silence, his death
But he isn't. I thought
Hannibal would be with me
And he is, always.

Joni sings
Just before our love got lost, you said
I am as constant as a northern star, and I said
Constantly in the darkness, where's that at?
If you want me I'll be in the bar.

Awake in daylight, I'm on the ocean
But at night, when I sleep
Or can't sleep
I feel the strength of water
Layers of heavy muscle, fathoms deep
And when it moves me
Lifts, tugs, sinks me
I feel Hannibal.

The body remembers, and mine
Comes apart and coalesces

Around him.

I pull off a mitten and slip my hand
Down, between, underneath
Layers of fabric to find
The scar. The place
Where he cut me.

I think about birth -
Bearing down
Rope sliced
New life loose.
I think about my mother.

I don't know how I was born.
The most my father ever said was
As soon as you were off the teat
She was gone.
And I watched him age
A lifetime as he said it.

I bring her into my boat now
Susan
A shadow in the starlight.
Her details form and slip
Like cobwebs in the wind
But I talk to her anyway.

I don't know whether
You pushed me out
Pushed me away
Turned your face away
From my jellied limbs
And hungry mouth
Or if I was cut from you
Like this -

The scar crosses my abdomen
Just above where yours
Would have been.
When I touch it I can feel
How the new skin shies
Like a frightened dog
Muscles and organs below
Tense, sheltering in place.

I never used to think about you
But now I can't stop, thinking
We might have shared this.

I wait in the oceanroar night and find
I can't conjure words for you to speak
Any more than I can see your face
So instead I picture your hands
Folded tight in your lap.

Joni sings
You're in my blood like holy wine.
You taste so bitter and so sweet.
Oh I could drink a case of you, darling
And I would still be on my feet.

Margot, on the other hand
Catches light through a flickering aperture
Like a silent film heroine as she joins us.
Her hand, too, beneath her shirt
Touching the scar which crosses her abdomen
Just below where mine is.

She says
Hoping was the worst part.
Knowing I had power, freedom
Then waking, realizing
None of it mattered
As long as I was his.

I think about procreation -
A small uncertain piece of me
A small uncertain piece of Margot
Curling together in a bloodwarm yolk
Pulled by the inertia of a flywheel.

You're right, I tell her.
Hoping was the worst part.
And she offers me
The saddest smile.

The boat bucks beneath me
And I close my eyes.
Hannibal intruding, always.
Rivers of Hannibal
Run dry inside of me.

Joni sings
I remember that time you told me
You said, Love is touching souls.
Surely you touched mine, 'cause
Part of you pours out of me
In these lines from time to time.

Hannibal, were you trying
To cut it away?
This thing created
Grown in us. Did you think
You would kill it? ‘Cause
It’s still here, born whole.
Alive all on its own.

The cut ends nothing.
It creates the scar which marks
Your place on my body.
Captured in flesh
This movement of your hand
Which was a movement of your mind.

Another ghost joins my crew.
In truth she’s been here awhile
But I don’t remember her name.
I only saw her once
When I was a police cadet in Baton Rouge.

It was early morning and she was
Hugging her knees to her chest
In the corner of a cell, dress torn
Blood-matted curls pushed forward
To hide her broken, swelling face.

Officers had been called
To a domestic disturbance
Which turned into an arrest
For solicitation and cross-dressing.
The initial report said
She came in with a sprained wrist.

The officers on duty
Had already washed their hands
Zipped their flies
And were laughing at her claim
That the man had been her boyfriend
For almost two years.

Before I set sail, Jack said
He would have been happy
For me and Hannibal.
I didn’t answer, because
I didn’t understand what he meant.

It was the only time he admitted
To knowing about us

But what he meant
That other *would have been* life
Is still unfathomable to me.

Except
There was a night in my house
When you tuned the piano and played
Chopin's *Nocturne No. 8 in D-flat major.*
The dogs were so confused by the sound
And I sat next to you on the bench
Watching your hands
Your face, listening to the music
Before pulling you back
Into my bed.

Yes
Says the woman from Baton Rouge.
That's what it was.
A life by night
Away from windows
Where we were free.

Not really free
Margot says, turning to her
Taking her hand.

Never not in a cage
Says my mother-shaped shadow
And maybe she looks at me.

Joni sings
I met a woman
She had a mouth like yours.
She knew your life
She knew your devils and your deeds
And she said, Go to him
Stay with him if you can
But be prepared to bleed.

Are you thinking
Of me tonight, Hannibal?
On the edge of waking
Do you still reach for me
Like a phantom limb?

Somewhere far from here
Have you summoned
Your own ghost council?

What are they telling you
About us?

It wouldn't be fair to give away the ending
Says Medea from beneath a swell.
Even if it's just the beginning again.

Wind tightens the sail
With a dull thud
Like a blow to the gut
And salty spray glitters
Through the tumbling hair
Of my figurehead.

From the pulpit she turns
Back to me
Lantern light catching
The scar crossing
Her throat.

The mark was always there
Abigail says.
Only now you can see it.

I want to tell her
I'm going to hunt him.
Kill him in her name.
But my words fall beneath her gaze
Like birds shot from the sky.

It's never that easy
She says.

Joni sings
Oh but you are in my blood
You're my holy wine.
You're so bitter
Bitter and so sweet.
Oh I could drink a case of you, darling
And still I'd be on my feet.
I would still be on my feet.

Mr. & Mrs. Roman Fell

Chapter Summary

Bedelia reflects on her new life in Florence.

Bedelia:

Mrs. Roman Fell
Is learning her way around Florence.
She is becoming more adept at the language.
She's always had a good ear.

She wakes each morning
With the bells of Santissima Annunziata
Momentarily stunned to find herself
In the Palazzo Capponi apartment
Still after all these months.

Her husband rises early
He’s the cook in their marriage
Preparing utopian landscapes of breakfast
Which he himself eats sparingly from.
She eats alone in the morning
Drinking sweet strong coffee on the balcony.

Her husband leaves her shopping lists
Penned quickly in his immaculate hand.
As acting curator of the Capponi Library
He has little time for errands.
Mrs. Roman Fell wears a wide-brimmed hat
A light long coat against the autumn chill.
Her wardrobe expensive, Parisian boutique.

Mrs. Roman Fell goes where the locals go
Old-fashioned out of the way shops
Where only Italian is spoken.
No one has time for tourists.
According to her husband’s exacting standards
She buys truffles, cheese, oils and wine
Esoteric spices and dark meaty olives.
The shopkeepers know her by name.

Evenings sweep society in on sequined trains
As though one world ends and another begins
In time with the sinking sun.
Dr. Roman Fell holds an enviable position
Within elite cultural circles.
There are dinners and dances, lectures and gallery shows.
A series of breathtaking gilded rooms she enters
On her husband's arm. A sleek prized falcon
In a champagne-colored dress.

These are the dreams
Of Mrs. Roman Fell's life. Simone Fell
Who has been dead for almost
Seven months now.

In her dresses and jewels
I move in circles beneath chandeliers
Propelled by Hannibal's swift, sure body.
I hold opera programs in my her gloved hands
And will my Self to not crush them to pulp.
I watch well-heeled academics and patrons
Enact tired dramas of veiled disdain, appraisal
Solicitous flattery and flirtation with Hannibal
Small bright birds fluttering before a tiger's open mouth.

It's a relief to be alone in this ancient beautiful city
Where I often begin to lose my Self in its rhythms -
The church bells and tourists, laborers and children
Piazzas suddenly consumed by riots of pigeons, mid-air.
Then I will see a uniformed officer of the *polizia*, or
Signore Brambilla at the *macelleria* will ask me
Whether there is anything else I need
And it is as though I wake.

But what would I say?
I am wearing the clothes of a dead woman.
I left my country in the middle of the night
At the behest of a man who broke into my home
To clean his wounds in water pink with blood.
Who gifted me the life of Simone Fell.
None of it at gun or knife point.

Outside our performance
Of Mr. and Mrs. Roman Fell
Hannibal almost never touches me
Has never put his teeth to me.
We sleep in separate rooms.
He does not insist I eat meat.

I know there is a limit
To my usefulness.
Right now Hannibal needs a hostage.
A captive audience. Perhaps
He simply needs to be known.

Aiutami. Rapito. Assassino.
What does it mean
To be in danger
And not run?

The Florentine Sonnets

Chapter Summary

Hannibal reflects on his new life in Florence!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal:

Past has become commodity, currency in Florence.
Its windows stare, unblinking. Unnoticed, its foundations groan
Beneath rivers of hungry tourist, lazy scholar, deluded epigone.
A silent people haunts this city, pedestaled and beautiful
Elegiac captives reduced in marble, immutable.
Moments of cataclysm, prophecy, empires overthrown
Exposed for display, tragedies, eternally suffered alone.
A warrior's death *in medias res*, agony monumental
Women swept up in unyielding arms, preludes to rape.
One can't help but wonder, were they aware
Whether the statues would writhe, unseen
To witness the passage from which they were forced.
Exiles descending for blood, offerings to their despair
The silent people of Florence would scream.

~

A curator's *raison d'être* is, primarily, edification
As much as preservation. Knowledge unshared
Represents grievous waste, society unprepared
For the inevitable retrograde circling, having forgotten
The precipitating crises, fruits of schemes misbegotten.
Esteemed members of the Studiolo tell me I have erred:
My exhibit is barbarous, unworthy, their condemnations impaired
By ticket sales. By crowds, held aloft in fine silks and stones, come to wanton
Amid iron maidens, pears of anguish, breaking wheels and breast rippers.
I enjoy watching their faces come alive in horror, fascination akin to delight
As they circle the Judas cradle. The guide in their hands prompts reflection:
On fanaticism, justice, cruelty. The ideals of our shared humanity. But
Lofty dialectic can never fully extinguish the visceral, the bite.
The satisfaction of piercing, being pierced: our first infection.

~

Society is theater, after all, the most impeccable production
Susceptible to human error, fallible mechanics, missed cues.
In the ointment of my Florentine life there is, inevitably, a man, whose
Frank appraising interest tickles, a distraction on my periphery:
Antony Dimmond, insouciant in black tie, assured in our affinity.
I know he waits for me in the night garden, daring me to excuse
My Self from the stage, consummate our veiled and guarded interviews.
Mrs. Fell stiffens at my side, averting her eyes from this nascent conspiracy
A wife's unspoken clemency to the deviance of her inconstant husband.
Theater upon theater, polyphony, an intricate living mechanism
These lives we have made, been set free and encaged by. What would transpire
If, as Bedelia fears (hopes?) my nature be one of chaos, a self-devouring star?
Antony Dimmond can have the garden, and Bedelia her skepticism.
A lifelong cultivation, my performance requires a fuel more deadly to catch fire.

Chapter End Notes

As I'm sure you've noticed, rigid, rhyming forms are not my jam, so of course I thought it would be fun for Hannibal to make his entrance in a rigid, rhyming form. My hope is that it illustrates how he's walled himself back up behind this new Person Suit, maintaining intense control over himself to refute the fact that Will completely upended his life/sense of self. Idk, it was a fun challenge and I'm happy with how these turned out :)

Butchering Day

Chapter Summary

Margot and Alana walk the grounds of Muskrat Farm.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Margot:

It's almost Halloween and I've been appointed
Overseer of the slaughter.
My duties aren't taxing.
Mason chose the butchers
Who arrive all dressed in white
Assemble themselves on the lawn
Beneath what could be a wedding canopy.

They arrange stainless steel tables
Coolers open for the cuts
Barrels for the rest.
Each man unrolls a soft bundle
Swaddling their favorite knives.
They speak to each other quietly
Pointedly not looking at me
As though I am either invisible
Or too terrible to look upon.

It's a strange thing to represent power -
Secondhand high, contaminant fantasy.
Margot Verger through their eyes
The averting of their eyes
Stands pillar-like, placid
Gloved hands held
Tight behind her back.

That Margot Verger
Is not the Self who sees
Alana
Walking carefully through the grass
Eyeing me with a small, game smile.
This Self who smiles back at her

Feels echoing
A prismatic architecture
Where light opens in a mile
Of soft sanded canvas
And distant birds.

Alana:

Getting ready for a party?

Margot:

In a way.
We supply the meat
For the town's Halloween festival.
It was our father's idea, a tradition
To make us seem more or less
Like benevolent feudal lords.
Today is butchering day.

Alana's smile slips
An unseen shadow alighting
Between the slim wings of her brow.

Don't tell me.
Vegetarian?

Alana:

I
No.

Margot:

She looks away
Flush warming her cheeks
While I try and fail to not think
About the warm skin
Beneath her plum paisley scarf.

It's midday, sun-blasted
Into cold vibrating color.
The butchers turn their attention
To the nearby pig enclosure.

The corner of Alana's mouth
Curls, self-conscious.

Alana:

Raised vegetarian.
My parents have strong views.

Margot:

Religious?

Alana:

Environmental, mostly
But also, I suppose
A general opposition
To confinement.
Life created
And raised for death.
Consumption.

Margot:

Isn't all life created for death?
That's kind of the point.

Alana:

You sound like Hannibal.

Margot's long black coat
Sways against her legs
Black riding boots tall
Polished gleaming as shell casings.
She watches me, large hooded eyes
Edged with kohl, lips stained wine red.
A royal family's private assassin.

Margot:

He was my therapist
If briefly.

Alana:

Before I can answer
A heavy industrial *thud*
Sounds from the enclosure
Provokes a flash boiling
Of panic amongst the animals
Fleshy tined hooves
Spiking clumps of black earth.

It takes two men to carry
The dead pig, its pale pink body
Beacon-white in the sun's burning eye.
I don't have time to realize
What's about to happen
Until it's already in motion
The movement of the butchers
Automatic, a chain reaction
And all I can see is blood
Ragged flesh edges
Hot dark emptying cavities
Each steaming piece jiggling
As it's cast aside.

I don't realize
How heavily I'm braced
Against my cane until
A narrow curtain of night
Pulls across my periphery
As Margot approaches.

Margot:

Let's take a walk.
They don't need me here.

Alana sways a little as she steps back
Gaze fixed beneath the canopy
Where the feathery grass is being churned
Into bloody mud, a second pig brought forth.
Frown deepening, she turns away.

I lead her up the lawn
To a path which runs
From the house, to the forest
Where trees toss as though underwater
A contained perpetual shattering of light
Through each candleglow leaf.

Alana seems to gather her Self
Closes her eyes and breathes deep
In the bloodless wind, which slides
Its fingers gently
Through her loose dark hair.

To be honest
I'm surprised you don't
Sound more like Hannibal.
You knew him for years.

Alana:

I don't think
He was ever intrigued enough by me
To work at my cultivation
The way he did with you and Will.

Margot:

Maybe he valued you
As you are.

She laughs at that
A sweet husky sound
Clipped too short
And whoever I am
With her
For her
Curls in on itself
Belly up in a sunbeam.

Alana:

As I *was*.

Margot:

Have you changed so much?

Alana:

I'm surprised
By my own indignation at this
But of course
Margot doesn't know
Never met
Before me.

She hasn't been there
For the hours I've spent with Mason
Tracking down flight manifests
Lecter family history
International translators.

I'd like to think so.

Margot:

Why?

Alana:

I'm your brother's therapist.
You're not mine.

Margot:

You don't have to answer
If you don't want to.

Alana:

I have no reason
To tell Margot Verger anything.
No reason to be walking with her
Outside work hours, my back
And hips already aching, but

I want to tell her
I think I like who I am
Who I become
When she looks at me.

I want to tell her
It was a bad investment
Believing the best of others.
Putting my trust in justice.

I want to tell her
I can never again be
That broken woman
On her back in the rain.

Margot:

We keep walking in silence
In blindness between
Whiteout sun and pit-black shadow
Catching pieces of the path ahead.

I want to tell her
The center of a labyrinth
Is a small world, quiet
Deadened by those layered walls.

I want to tell her
How easily a fortress
Becomes a prison, depending
On who holds the key.

I want to ask her
How she plans to fight in Mason’s crusade
When she can’t even watch
A pig being killed.

Chapter End Notes

I became so attached to Margot while writing part 2 that I knew I wanted to develop more of a love story for her and Alana. So far in this process of writing Fireflies, their storyline has become something of a refuge for me, and I'm having a lot of fun with it <3

A Stranger From The Sea

Chapter Summary

Will arrives in Portugal, disoriented from his journey.

Will:

The world finds me again as land emerges
From a pearly midday haze horizon.
I stare at it for a long time
Uncomprehending
Until my body starts to come alive
Consulting maps, compass
Pocketing passport and phrasebooks
Assembling my belongings.
Hovering just over my own shoulder
I watch my body perform these tasks
The world of water narrowing, pulling me
Into the mouth of the Tagus River.

After twenty-two days at sea
I no longer feel human -
Unshaven, hair stiff with salt
Stinking and unwashed.
A mythic man-shaped creature.
Body reeling, trembling to stand
On an unmoving surface
Disoriented by humanity -
A sudden chaos
Of sound, bodies, movement
Field of vision consumed
By bright, swarming ants
Language incomprehensible.

The body called Will Graham
Mercifully takes over once more
Wielding his Portuguese phrasebook
With the obliging if bemused locals.
Shouting from boat to boat
They produce a translator -
A teenage boy, struggling to hide his excitement
At the unexpected turn his day has taken.

With the aid of this attentive shepherd
His halting schoolroom English
Will Graham sells his boat for cash
Meeting incredulity with a story -
He is an adventurer, a traveler
Undertaking his Grand Tour
Backpacking, traveling light.
This story clearly aligns with local impressions
Of American folly and extravagance.
They lift their eyebrows and chuckle
Shake their heads as they count out the money.
He sells, swaps, and gives away
Everything he can afford to lose.

With each interaction I continue
To be surprised, bewildered
By the ease with which people accept
Will Graham. By the way they turn
Look into his face expectantly
As though he is a person
Just as they are.
He must look and talk as they do
Must move in a way which
Does not signal harm.

The boy, João, asks questions
About Will Graham, about America
Smiling at my gentle lies.
He doesn't need to know
The truth of a forfeited life
All of it cut from me
In pieces burned on a pyre
For the prayer of a constant wind.

As payment for his service
I offer him my cassette player
My tape collection.
He is delighted.

Once I've taken my leave of him
There's nothing to do but wait
For my train, ticket in hand
Cash hidden close to my body.
It's November 22, 1977
And I feel Will Graham become
Invisible once more to the life
Of the world carrying on around him

But

I must be real
I must be here
Because a dog emerges
And wanders over to me.

A stray, small but well-fed
A fact explained at once
By her doe eyes and sweet face.
Her gentleness.
A whole city would band together
To adopt a dog like this.
She sniffs my shoes, smelling
The fishy brine of the sea, the docks.
I hold out my hand to show her
I mean no harm.
It must be true
Because she licks me
Allows me to touch her
And I want to die.

If she's wrong
About me
Then I've lost
All hope of understanding
Who or what I am
But
How can she be right?
How can she not
Smell it on me?

Past & Prelude

Hannibal:

Antony Dimmond lures me into my own exhibit
The cavernous room dark-gilded
Implements of pain and death, strange rough totems
Caught within the glinting panes of their display cases.
The sigils of a lost language and a forgotten world.

Antony Dimmond flirts with me shamelessly
Hands held behind his back
As he wanders, unconcerned, between the displays.
We discuss the possibilities of twisting
Untwisting each other on the breaking wheel.

In a country still darkened by fascism's shadow
The absence of artifice is refreshing, almost whimsical.
A testament to the structures and strictures which allow
Antony Dimmond to live with the self-assured unconcern
Of a man who mistakes luck for cleverness.

Unexpectedly
He reminds me of Mason Verger.
Mason as he was before
And I seem to hear claws
Scraping quietly over floorboards.
Snow feathering against window panes
The darkness beyond full of trees.

Mason sprawled
Consciousness mutating
As I stand over him, considering
How and why I will make him suffer.

It would be easy
Antony tells me without telling me
To take him into my bed.
The only thing he seems to be asking for
Without asking, in exchange -
Our mutual understanding
That I have disposed of the Fells
And Antony Dimmond knows it.

Bedelia:

Your self control is impressive.

Hannibal:

Surprising?

Bedelia:

Perhaps not as much as it should be.
You've always struck me as someone
Who needs to, at the very least
Present the appearance
Of total self control.

Hannibal smiles at this
Without looking at me.
He is at work in the kitchen
Piping whipped lemon ricotta
Into pastry light and delicate
As shed cicada carapaces.

For a moment I am tempted
To push, to ask him
When his need for control began
But this would be for my satisfaction
Rather than his benefit.
Whenever possible
A therapist must allow their patient
To follow these paths themselves.

As with so many things in Hannibal's life
Mischa curls shivering, root-pale
In the nexus: a cradle of deep-earth cold
Which keeps her safe and small.
Untouched and untouchable.
The first and perhaps only
Love of Hannibal's life.

He's never told me everything, but
Enough for me to hold a rough map.
To look at the man
Balletic in wrath or peace
And see the starving boy
So close to death
He does not comprehend
His beloved between his teeth.

Fireflies

Chapter Summary

Will goes to Lecter Castle to commune with the living and the dead.

Will:

If places can die like people
Lecter Castle is primordial.
Set apart from time
As first stories always are.

It is Castle of ghost story fame -
Towers and turrets, broken stone
Thick pelt of leafy vines
Windows blinded.

As I climb the blackened gates
How was this once Home?
And do the gravestones emerging
Like teeth from the tall grass
Still speak their mother tongue?

Silence is bodied here
Layered blanket-heavy
Up to the burning firmament
Down to the crushing depths.
Even the animals seem to understand
Life is forbidden here, but

There are fireflies
Aurora borealis atomized
Lifting and sinking yellow eyes
Lazily, as though illumination
Is a thought occurring to them
On the edge of sleep.

I stand alone
Ten miles outside Vilnius
In the lowering evening gloam.
It is November 30, 1977
And I thought I would feel you here.

If there was a place
Where the dust would exhale you
It should be here -
Where you were born
Where you died
Where you were born again.
The grave cradle to which
The black swans never returned.

I am cold
Remembering you.

Cold
The way comets are cold
My thoughts of you forming
The heart star burning core
Combustion propelling hot puppeting
Wires through the walking meat of me.

Cold remembering
The heat of your bed.
It was Valentine's Day, almost
Real, that was real
And you, exiled heir, long-lost
Fairy tale prince
Fate-darkened and fell
Told me the story.

~

Your words in my head
Pull me away from the ruin
Into the conquering forest
Through the winking yellow green ghost lights
Following the remains
Of a dirt path which was once a road.
I avoid turning on my flashlight
As the sky blackens above me.
Its light would feel too much
Like violence in this place.

I feel the clearing open
Ahead of me, the trees held at bay
By a dark collapsing mass. I know
I've found what I was looking for.
What's left of the hunting lodge
Where you and your family tried

To hide from war. A corpse
Long-forgotten in the undergrowth.

I am seized by the thought -
If time were to reverse as you dreamed
The chariot-pulled fire from its bed
Back into the sky, bewildering the birds
This place would remain
As dark as it is now.
A pocket of Hell
Opened in the land of the living.

I can hear the remains hiss
As the eye of my flashlight moves over them.
Moldering wood.
Broken stone.
Is this what I've come here for, Hannibal?

Is this why I sailed the ocean
Shedding my life behind me in shards
Of cloudy chrysalis carried on the waves?
Have I been casting a spell to
Feel you, and in that feeling
See you, and in that seeing
Know you?

~

Yes
That's exactly what I've done.
Because I'm a ghost now
And ghosts have power
Living people don't.
There is power in this
Half-life post-death dying.

But first
I must pay my respects
To the princess of this kingdom of Silence.

I conjure her -
Ducking beneath the rotting door frame
Rich clothes gone threadbare
Around pale sparrow limbs.
Baby soft hair.
Bright dark eyes
Gazing up at me
In fear and confusion.

Would it be enough
For me to speak her brother's name
To earn her trust?
To say I have come here
Because he cannot?
Hannibal Lecter, I would say.
Meile
Mano meile
Meilasis

The only Lithuanian words
I know by heart.

I say nothing
Because the ghost of Mischa Lecter
Is not here.
I'm just lonely
But that's not the point.

I break a piece of wood from the lodge
Snap slim green branches
Pocket a stone
A handful of dry ashy soil.
I carry my ingredients
Back through the forest.
If Mischa follows me
That's her business.

The night begins to breathe again.

~

I lose the path in dark grasping branches
But I am not afraid. I am guided
Hardly surprised when the clouds part
And I see moonlight catching on rough stone -
A little girl in peasant dress
Bearing a small bundle of lilies
Standing shyly on a plinth which rises
From the center of a dry fountain
Clotted with snails.
Her face little more than the suggestion
Of brow, nose, cheeks and chin.

Following ghost knowledge
I layer fresh and haunted wood
In the basin beneath her tiny feet.
Pour out the cursed soil
Lay the foundation stone.

My diligent scholarship is rewarded
When the sparks from my lighter catch.
Fire shadows wave and shatter over her face.
Cold snail flesh sizzling in cracking spiral shells.

~

For every action
There is an equal
And opposite reaction.

But then there is violence
Which causes life to turn inward
Invert and *pull*. Violence
Exactly equal to itself -

Creatures formed cramped
Suffocated in the dark
Jagged gestation
Until they can stretch.
Teeth *inflorescere*.

Hannibal Lecter died in this forest
And then he walked out of it.

How many others
Have risen
Are rising
Will rise?
From battlefields and trenches
Gas chambers and killing fields
Napalm-scorched villages.
Unmarked mass graves.

How far will they walk
In every beating half-life post-death heart
And for how long?

A city is on fire
And a baby is being born in the street.

I speak into the windy flames
A divining conduit between souls -

I see you now, Hannibal.
Come to me.
Show me the way.

Vide Cor Tuum

Hannibal:

From nothing
There is
An apprehension
Of space
Breath
Movement

Air

And then

Dark spines
Branches bending
Back from me, snapping
In my wake as I walk
Through a forest
Each step amplified
By the static crackle
Of dead leaves.

It is night

The moon full
High above
In a cloudless sky or
Held in the skylight
Of a black dome.

I smell uncooked flesh
Gone bad.

There is a sound
In the distance, a hum
Captive wind
Rushing water.
I follow the sound
At its crescendo find
A clearing full of butterflies
Cuttings of night
Filling the rot-thick air, carpeting
The forest floor in mounds
Of soft frantic wings

Feathering the bodies
They consume.

Do I belatedly see
The fountain
Or does it
Appear?
I have forgotten
How this works.

The butterflies churn
And I know this place
The fountain gone dry
The little stone girl
With her arms full of flowers
I need
To leave
To wake
I have forgotten

But then

Will

Pieced together
From shifting planes
Of blue moonlight
Appears, or
Is seen

And I can't
Leave
Wake
Move

We watch each other
From across the fountain
Above the din
Composed of vibrations
And I think
I speak
His name

Will

Lifts his arm, and
As he opens his hand
Light
Fire in his palm

A dark mass burning
A bird, the ortolan
He says

Vide cor tuum

Cor
Heart

But the word
He says
Is also

Paura
Botsuraku
Sanctuaire
Uchitel'

In the tossing firelight
Chaos of butterflies
A figure, small
Slight as a clover stem
Blooms from the darkness
To stand at his side

I need
To leave
Wake
Run

I watch
Will lower his hand
Pale hot light
The most slowly falling star
To the little girl
Who scoops it
Burning from his palm
To hold in her cupped hands

Vide cor tuum

But the word
Mischa says
Before she eats
Is also

Meilė

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